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ABSTRACT

As part of an effort to assess the City University of New York's English as a Second Language (ESL) program, New York City Technical College conducted a study to determine if the ESL course protocol promoted positive academic outcomes among new immigrant students (NIS's) within the regular curricula. Using scores from standardized assessment examinations and measures of college performance from a sample of 717 freshman from 1990, characteristics of the average NIS were assessed and academic outcomes were examined using the following indicators: (1) cumulative grade point average (GPA) after 10 semesters of study, revealing that NIS's generally earned lower GPA's compared to mainstream students; (2) progress toward degree completion based on total credits earned, indicating that NIS's generally earned less credits than mainstream students; and (3) individuals' survival rate in the system as indicated by persistence and graduation rates after 10 semesters of study, suggesting that NIS's did tend to persist longer than mainstream students. Although the data may be interpreted as discouraging, it may be unfair to compare NIS's with mainstream students; a comparison to native-born students requiring remediation may yield more positive outcomes. Data tables are included. (TGI)

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The Effects of English as a Second Language on College Academic Outcomes

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Overview and Context of this Report:

Unlike most urban centers New York City has been growing. Although during the late-1970's through the mid-1980's there was a large exodus of native African-Americans, Latinos and Ethnic White populations to the suburbs, during the late-1980's the loss of native New Yorkers was more than offset by a huge influx of the so called "new immigrants" or "New" New Yorkers (NNY). This is probably so because of the City's long history of providing opportunity by supporting a large degree of professional specialization and career/work choice. Moreover, other "World Cities" such as London and Paris are seen as quintessentially English or French, New York City is an archetypical urban center. As early as 1643 when Manhattan had a population of 1,000, over 18 different languages were being spoken. By the early-1990's nearly 100 languages were being spoken within the New York City area. Today, the NNY makes up at least 30% of the City's population.

However, after World War two, important changes occurred in the structure of New York City's (NYC) labor market, leading to the contraction of the number of blue collar and semi-skilled jobs, and an increase in the technical and white collar opportunities. As a result, the traditional blue-collar job market that was so rich from the early-1940's to the mid-1960's, and one on which many immigrants and the working class were dependent on as a source of employment, has dwindled to approximately half of itself today.

These market changes have coincided with the arrival of the NNY from the third world who tend not to speak English and/or tend to

have weak academic backgrounds.

Another factor occurring simultaneously with the structural changes in labor and the population shifts, has been the rising floor of educational credentials needed for entry into the post-modern labor market. Essentially, credential inflation in conjunction with the loss of the blue-collar labor market has led many of the NNY who normally would not seek a college education, to do so now in ever increasing numbers.

The City University of New York (CUNY) since its inception has played a large role in the education of the children and grandchildren of the historically earlier immigrant populations of NYC. This tradition dates back one hundred and forty-three years. It is a tradition which has been instrumental in assisting hundreds of thousands of CUNY graduates out of the grip of poverty by creating upward mobility (Gorelick, 1981).

Since CUNY draws most of its students from New York City, the changes in the demographic make-up of the City become a reflection of the CUNY student body. A case in point is the CUNY 1992 Freshmen cohort. When asked what their country of birth was, 3.3% of this cohort reported Africa, 8.8% Asia, 25.6% the Caribbean, 10.1 the Dominican Republic, 4.9% Eastern Europe, 1.6 the Middle East, 11.2% South/Central America, 14.8% Western Europe, 13.7% Puerto Rico and 6.1% reported other (Immigration/Migration and the CUNY Student of the Future, Winter, 1995).

Of the 1992 New York City Technical College (City Tech) Freshmen cohort, 47% reported that their country of birth was

Puerto-Rico, 30% from other Caribbean, 20% from Asia and 10% from South America, Eastern Europe and the Dominican Republic (Immigration/Migration and the CUNY Student of the Future, Winter, 1995).

As a result, the overriding pedagogical challenge for the City Tech English as a Second Language (ESL) professional has been the integration of the NNY student into the mainstream curricula by providing the means of learning to speak, comprehend, read and write English on a college level.

There is good evidence that the cultural capital (manner of social interaction, dress, behavior, speech and acquiring knowledge) of a student is correlated with learning. Therefore, research suggests that the cultural resources tied to the dominant culture facilitates the transmission of knowledge more readily than cultural resources from subordinate cultures (Bourdieu, 1977). Consequently, students with the dominant background by virtue of a certain cultural competency established through family socialization, are provided with the means to succeed, implicitly do so.

Indeed, during the Spring 1994 semester the City University of New York convened a Task Force to study English as a Second Language. One major empirical tool this Task Force utilized was a roundtable discussion group drawn from community leaders and CUNY students. The participants focused on integration problems the NNY students are faced in entering the CUNY's "mainstream" curricula.

There were two main concerns expressed by the roundtable

respondents: 1) to provide all students whose language is not English, with the means to learn to speak, write and read English on a college level and 2) create strategies for the effective acculturation of those from other cultures into American society and America's system of higher education.

Thus, given the above mentioned concerns and New York City's post-modern economic structural changes, this report will address the following question: given the growth of the NNY City Tech student, and given the challenge and complexity of acquiring English proficiency, has the ESL course protocol promoted positive academic outcomes of the NNY student within the "regular" curricula of City Tech ?

Types of Data and Procedure:

The data were provided by Dr. Chan, Enrollment Management, New York City Technical College. The sample used in this study represents 20% of the 1990 Freshmen class of this college (N=717).

This study will employ two categories of data in analyzing the main concepts advanced in this report. The categories of data are: (1) CUNY's STANDARDIZED ASSESSMENT EXAMINATIONS including a) the pass rate of the CUNY Reading Examination. The CUNY Freshmen Skills Assessment Test in reading is a 45 item reading comprehension subject of the Descriptive Tests of Language Skills (DTLS) (Educational Testing Service, 1978). The DTLS was specifically designed to identify students who may need special assistance in particular aspects of reading and language use before

undertaking standard college level work. b) the pass rate on CUNY Writing Examination. The CUNY Writing Skills Assessment test is a choice of one out of two essay type test, designed to identify students with deficiencies in writing. This examination was also locally constructed with no national norms. (2) MEASURES OF COLLEGE PERFORMANCE including the GPA after 10 semesters of study, the number of college credits earned over the 10 semester period, and the persistence and graduation rate after 10 semesters of study.

Data on CUNY Assessment Examinations and measures of college performance were extracted from New York City Technical College's official records.

The intention of this study is the comparison of the academic outcomes of two groups of students: the first group is representative of the so-called mainstream student (MS). For the purposes of this study we will define the mainstream student as an individual who was not in need of remediation, native-born and **not** enrolled in a "special program" (AA 101, Seek, Express or Freshman Year Leadership Program) at New York City Technical College (N=342). The other group of individuals are not native-born, required remediation in the form of English as a Second Language (NNY) and are **also not** enrolled in a "special program" (N=375) at City Tech.

Characteristics of the Average NNY City Tech Student:

The majority of the NNY City Tech students tend to be female (61%), on average are older than the City Tech native-born student (30% are 23 years old or more vs. 15%), are more likely to have a

GED than the native-born student (20% vs 14%), tend to have higher degree aspirations than the native-born students (20% aspires to an Associates degree, 30% a Baccalaureate and 50% professional degrees vs. 38% AAS/AA, 28% BA/BS and 26% professional degree), the NNY students tend to use academic advisement, personal counseling, career counseling, day care services, job placement services, learning centers and computer facilities more often than native-born students, tends to earn fewer credits than the native-born student (40 vs. 43 credits), tends to achieve a lower GPA than the native-born student (2.06 vs. 2.40) and finally is more likely to be on academic probation than the native-born student (35% vs. 25%).

Academic Outcomes of the NNY City Tech Student:

As was noted in the Types of Data section, this report will be using three critical indicators which will help us to assess the academic performance of the NNY student (It should be noted that these factors are often used in the educational and sociological literature, and were not chosen randomly).

The first indicator we will be discussing is the quality of work in college as indicated by the cumulative grade point average after 10 semesters of study (GPA). The second is the progress toward degree completion, or the total credits earned over the 10 semesters of study. The last is the individuals' survival rate in the system as indicated by the persistence and the graduation rate

after 10 semesters of study.

Grade Point Average:

Table 1 suggests that 36% of the NNY students have earned a GPA of 1:99 and under, compared to 26% of the MS student. Twenty-five percent of the NNY students earned a GPA of between 2:00-2:49, compared to 18% of the MS student. Eighteen percent of the NNY students earned a GPA of between 2:50 to 2:99, compared to 25% of the MS student. Finally, Table 1 suggests that 21% of the NNY students earned a GPA of 3:00 and greater, compared to 31% of the MS student.

The literature points to that GPA as significantly related to the likelihood of graduating and entering the work force and/or transferring to a Baccalaureate degree program by virtue of quality school work.

Finally, research suggests that a major factor in the community-college students' failure to graduate and/or attaining a Baccalaureate is low GPA (Dougherty, 1987).

Total Credits Earned:

Table 2 suggests that 43% of the NNY students have earned 22 credits and under, compared to 40% of the MS student. Fifteen percent of the NNY students have earned 23-45 credits, compared to 18% of the MS student. Finally, Table 2 suggests that 42% of the NNY students have earned 46 credits and greater, compared to 45% of

the MS students.

These data could be suggesting that the ESL course protocol has familiarized the NNY student with English, increasing the odds of accumulating credits.

Persistence/ Graduation:

Table 3 suggests that 63% of the NNY students remained enrolled over the 10 semester period, compared to 55% of the MS students. Sixteen percent of the NNY students have a history of stopping-out and in of City Tech, compared to 15% of the MS students. Finally, 21% of the NNY students dropped-out after the first semester of study, compared to 29% of the MS student. These data may be suggesting that the NNY tends to persist longer than the MS student.

Table 4 suggests that 22% of NNY students graduated from City Tech after the tenth semester of study, compared to 34% of the MS student.

Of course, graduation places the NNY student within the labor market earning wages, paying taxes and practicing his/her chosen career.

Conclusions:

The general role of education in the occupational achievement of immigrants has long been a focus of research. Within the discipline of Sociology, Assimilation Theory mostly assumed that education would help immigrants to become acculurated and subsequently to assimilate into American society.

The above mentioned idea notwithstanding, it is important to note that many scholars have questioned some or all of these assumed outcomes derived from Assimilation Theory. For example, it has been found that Korean-Americans are relatively unassimilated and have created "enclaves" regardless of education and income. On the other hand, there is a strong relationship with education, income and assimilation among Japanese-Americans (Hurh and Kim, 1984).

Human Capital Theory even more directly asserts the positive role of education in the advancement of immigrants. This paradigm suggests that high levels of formal education increases life-chance prospects of the immigrant within the labor market. Finally, Human Capital Theory has dominated America's policy toward the immigrant for nearly a century.

Again, it is noteworthy here to suggest that Human Capital Theory assumptions have also been questioned by some scholars. Indeed, the successful social and economic entry of new immigrants may be a "myth" (Wong and Woo, 1985).

Although the data cited herein may be interpreted as discouraging by some, it should be noted that: 1) comparing mainstream students with NNY students may have been too ambitious. That is to say, had a comparison of native-born students requiring remediation had been made with NNY students, the outcomes probably would have looked differently; and 2) the data associated with the NNY students are not too far off the MS student mark.

Hence, given that there is research which suggests that

increased levels of education and upward mobility may be correlated with the children of immigrants after their parents' initial adjustments to the American culture (Bonacich and Cheng 1984), it may be correct to suggest that the ESL course protocol at City Tech has fostered positive academic outcomes for the NNY student. Furthermore, these data should not only be viewed as increased educational attainment and life-chances of a signal NNY student, but for the future cultural capital he/she may bring to his/her family. That is, earlier during our discussion of cultural capital we saw that parents who are acquainted with the dominant culture may increase their children's chances at school success. On the other hand, parents who are not familiar with the dominant culture may unknowingly create academic handicaps for their children, thus creating and perpetuating cycles of school failure and non-assimilation into the American culture.

Table 1: **Grade Point Average**
N=717

	< - 1.99	2:00-2.49	2.50-2.99	3.00 - >
NNY Student N=375	36%	25%	18%	21%

Mainstream Student N=342	26%	+	18%	+	25%	+ 31%

Table 2: Credits Earned
N=717

	0 - 22	+	23 - 45	+	46 - >
NNY Student N=375	43%	+	15%	+	42%
Mainstream Student N=342	40%	+	18%	+	45%

Table 3: Persistence
N=717

	Enrolled	+	Stopped in/out	+	Dropped out
NNY Student N=375	63%	+	16%	+	21%

Mainstream Student N=342	55%	+	15%	+	29%

Table 4: Graduation Rate
N=717

	Graduation	+	Incompletion
NNY Student N=375	22%	+	78%
Mainstream Student N=342	34%	+	66%